A String of Pearls.

BY ELIZA F. POLLARD, AUTHOR OF "ROGER THE RANGER," ETC.

"'I desire justice, above all things,' answered Sir James." *p.* 115.

CHAPTER III.

STARTLING NEWS.

A TALL, fair girl was walking quickly through the village of Barston towards the Vicarage. Her face was flushed, her dark hazel eyes brilliant with excitement. In her hand she held a crumpled envelope.

It was a bright summer day, and the air was full of the scent of flowers and the song of birds. The pretty gabled Vicarage was half smothered with white roses clambering round the windows, whilst over the porch a luxuriant passion-flower mingled its dark green leaves with its star-like blossoms.

Queenie lifted the latch of the garden-gate, and went up the gravel walk to the entrance. The door was half open, as was usual, so many people were always coming and going. Entering, she knocked at a door on the right-hand side of the square hall.

"Come in," and Queenie opened the study door, and walking across the room, stood by Mr. Bradley's desk.

"You, my child?" said the Vicar. "Has anything happened? Are you in any trouble?" He laid down his pen, and looked at her.

"Thank you, sir, we are in no trouble; but something very strange has happened, and I have come to ask your advice."

"Which you know I am always ready to give you, Marjory," he answered, kindly.

"I have received these two letters. Will you read them, and tell me what I had better do?" and she laid them on the desk before the Vicar. Mr. Bradley took one up, and at first skimmed it rapidly through, but the contents seemed to surprise him so much that he went back and perused it more carefully. It ran thus:

"Paris, June 5th, 18—.

"SIR,—I have to inform you that my second cousin, Mr. Horace Harcroft, who occupied a studio in the Rue Blanche next to mine, died yesterday, after a short illness. On my return from a week's sketching tour I was informed that he was ill and had asked constantly for me. I cannot say we were close friends, for he was a remarkably silent and reserved man, but our work had thrown us much together, and we had always got on well.

"I was therefore grieved to see—as I did at once—how serious the case was. Mr. Harcroft himself fully realised it, for he told me immediately that he had been occupied in settling his business affairs, and asked me to execute one commission, about which he was particularly anxious. He told me to take from his safe a case containing a valuable pearl necklace and his will, executed, with the exception of a legacy to myself, in favour of Miss Marjory Cheniston, the daughter of a lady whom he had wished to marry in his youth. She had, however, preferred another man. He had since heard that both she and her husband had been killed in a railway accident, leaving this one daughter, and he desired to make her his heiress, adding, "I leave you a legacy simply as a mark of affectionate regard; you are

a man and are doing well, but this girl must be poor and alone, for Grace had no near relations, and so I would help her for my old love's sake.' I promised I would see everything done as he wished, and fully intended doing so, but owing to my not opening the safe and securing the case during his lifetime, I find it is illegal for me to do so after his death; indeed, the official seals have already been placed upon his furniture and cannot be removed until after the funeral, in presence of the authorities and Mr. Harcroft's nearest of kin. Mr. Harcroft further told me to communicate with you at once, which I hasten to do. According to French law the funeral should take place to-morrow, but I have obtained a delay to enable you or any member of his family to attend.—I remain, dear sir, yours truly, "PHILIP FLEMING."

"Well, Marjory, this is astounding news," said the Vicar, looking up. "What does Mr. Dobson say?"

Marjory pointed to the second letter, which ran thus:

"Lincoln's Inn, June, 18—.

"MY DEAR MARJORY,—As soon as you receive this, come up to town. I shall start for Paris to-morrow night, and wish you to go with me. Consult Mr. Bradley, he will see you safely off. Enclosed is a cheque for your expenses.—Yours faithfully,

"J. DOBSON."

"My child, I congratulate you most sincerely, and hope this accession of wealth may be blessed to both you and Noel," said the Vicar, rising. "We must tell Mrs. Bradley."

He called his wife, and rapidly informed her what had happened Marjory had never been a favourite with the Vicar's wife, who had always considered the girl self-willed and proud.

"Well! it is a very wonderful story," she said; "I only hope there is no mistake."

"Mistake! how can there be?" exclaimed Marjory.

"There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," said the lady. "If there should be a disappointment, I hope you will accept it in the right spirit, Marjory."

"I am sure I shall not," exclaimed Marjory. "I have always hated being poor. I want so many things, not for myself, but for Noel." She spoke passionately with violent eagerness.

"Well, well," said the Vicar, soothingly, "it certainly looks all right. Now you had better go home, Marjory, and get your things ready; I will drive you myself down to the station in time for the two o'clock express. I will also telegraph to Mr. Dobson to meet you."

"Thank you," said Marjory, "I will be ready. Good-bye, Mrs. Bradley."

"Good-bye, Marjory, and try not to set your heart too much on the good things of this world."

"Oh, how I hate that woman! how I have always hated her! I could almost fancy she has an evil eye. What business has she even to suppose there can be a mistake?" thought Marjory, as she hurried home.

"Queenie, Queenie, have you got the money?" and a handsome boy, with brown curly hair, strong and fair, the image of herself, came running down the road to meet her.

"Not yet, Noel, but I'm going to fetch it," she answered, stooping to kiss him as he threw his arms round her waist.

"Then you'll take me with you, Queenie?" he said.

"I am afraid I cannot, my darling. Mr. Dobson has sent for me, and I am going by the two o'clock express. You must be a good boy, and take care of Sarah whilst I am away."

"No, I will not, I will go with you," he said boldly.

"But I cannot take you, Noel, I am going across the sea. Don't make it too hard for me, dear; you know I would not leave you if I could help it," pleaded Marjory.

He looked up at her, saw the trouble in her face, gripped her hand hard, and said tremulously,

"All right, Queenie, I'll be good, only don't stay long away."

"Not an hour longer than I can help, you may be sure," she answered; and so they went hand in hand down the gravelled path leading to the cottage door—he such a bonny boy, she just seventeen, but looking even younger from the very simplicity of her dress, a plain, fresh cotton gown and white straw sailor hat; she still wore her hair loose, a brown wavy mass falling to her waist.

They went straight into the little kitchen, where Sarah was busy ironing.

"I'm going, Sarah," she said; "the Vicar will take me to the station, and Mr. Dobson will meet me in London."

"What for are you going?" said Sarah, putting down her iron, and looking at Marjory.

"To get the money Mr. Harcroft has left me," she answered.

"Ah, let be; I'm minded it will all turn to smoke," said Sarah, shaking her head. "Better bide at home, Queenie, and let others run after the money. If it comes to you, well and good, but don't go a wild goose chase after it."

"But it has come, Sarah dear," answered Marjory, throwing her arms round the neck of the faithful creature who had been to her both mother and friend.

"Oh, Sarah, I can't tell you how the feeling has been growing, growing for months. I am seventeen, I must do something to help you, I must get money somehow. Do you know, dear," she continued, lowering her voice, "I have asked God to make me rich; night and morning I have asked Him for Noel's sake, and He has heard me and sent me this money."

"I'm not so sure it's good for you, Queenie," answered Sarah. "Maybe it's a sin to pray to be rich. You know what the Bible says—'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'"

"Oh, but we will do so much good with it, Sarah, we will make so many people happy! Why, you are worse than Mrs. Bradley, but then she is always so horrid and you are not. Now come and pack my things or I shall be late."

It was not a long packing, and the little box was ready at the garden-gate when the Vicar drove up. At the last moment Queenie's courage almost failed her, but it was too late to draw back.

"It will soon be over, and I shall be home again and we shall be so happy," she exclaimed, the tears running down her face as she hugged and kissed Sarah and Noel in turn; and then, with an effort, she jumped into the pony carriage, saying to the Vicar, "Drive quickly, please; I must not look back."

And so she went forth into the world, leaving her peaceful home behind—a pure, simple-hearted maiden, but with intense longings and wild aspirations. Would they bear good wholesome fruit, or would they crumble like Dead Sea apples to dust and ashes? She went forth in all the strength of her young faith and glad hopefulness. It seems so easy to the young to climb the height of Parnassus, so easy to win honour, wealth, and all the good things of this life. How bright the sun shines! how beautiful the world looks! and in the long, long stretch of time before them surely they can attain their utmost desires, their wildest dreams! So thought Marjory Cheniston.

CHAPTER IV.

DISAPPOINTED.

THREE men and a young girl were together in the handsomely furnished studio which the late Mr. Harcroft had shared with his cousin Philip Fleming. Every face expressed surprise and annoyance, but none more so than Philip Fleming's.

He was a tall, slim man, of about seven or eight and twenty, fair, with clear, straightforward blue eyes, long, rather drooping moustache, and delicate irregular features. There was something foreign and artistic in his appearance, natural to a man who had lived many years abroad.

"I asked Mr Harcroft if he wished me to look into the safe at once," he was saying, addressing himself to Mr. Dobson and the elderly gentleman standing beside him, "and he replied, 'No, the case is secure; time enough when I am gone.' I never left him, and watched beside him all that long night. Towards morning, when I saw the end was near, I called the *concierge*, and he remained till all was over. Afterwards, remembering my promise, I took the keys of the deceased and was about to open the safe, when the *concierge* stopped me, explaining that by French law I was prohibited from touching anything in the apartment which had belonged to Mr. Harcroft—the studio was his, not mine. I told him the deceased's desire—nay, I might say, his command; but he assured me I could touch nothing, and so I left the room with him, returning an hour later to see the Government seals affixed. Since then I have not been into the studio, only into my friend's bedroom where he died. I wrote at once to you, Mr. Dobson, as Mr. Harcroft had desired me to do, telling you of his testamentary arrangements, and to you, Sir James Fleming, as his nearest of kin. I believe you were first cousins?"

"Yes, on his mother's side," answered the elderly gentleman, "but it is many years since I met Horace Harcroft. He was, as you say, a reserved man; some disappointment in early life had resulted in his going abroad and devoting himself to art. I am not at all surprised at his making a strange will; only it must be found, and you see there is no trace of it. The casket is there, but the will and pearls are gone; it is very awkward."

"They have been stolen," said Marjory; "someone must have taken them."

"Gently, gently," said Mr. Dobson, laying his hand on her arm, "we must be careful not to make false accusations. We have only Mr. Fleming's word that they ever existed, and this empty casket before us."

"Surely they are sufficient?" said Marjory, almost piteously. Was this wealth which she so longed for really going to escape her? "He may have put the pearls and will in a secret place for safety and have forgotten them."

"Throughout his short illness he was perfectly clear and collected, and was sensible to the very last," said Philip Fleming. "Besides, everything is in perfect order—his banking book, his money investments, his list of valuables, all except that empty jewel-case with this in his own handwriting pinned inside," and he pointed to a slip of paper lying on the table near them:

"For Marjory Cheniston, in loving memory of her mother.—H. H."

"The thief," said Sir James—"for a theft there certainly has been, if it is as you say—must, in his or her haste, have overlooked that. Why a disinterested person should have taken the will is inexplicable. I believe we are his only relatives. I had a half-sister, but she died some years ago. She married an Italian. I lost sight of her and never heard if she had any children."

"Then you and Mr. Philip Fleming are the heirs-at-law?" said Mr. Dobson.

"We are," said Sir James; "I have no children."

"It is very curious," said the lawyer, turning to Philip Fleming. "If it were not for your own testimony, you and Sir James would step into the property without opposition. If the will is not found, you will do so still."

"It must be found," said Philip, looking at Marjory. "Of its existence I am positive, and my belief is, that in stealing the pearls the paper was accidentally thrown on one side. Sir James was present when the seals were removed and witnessed the opening of the casket."

"I shall immediately inform the police," said Mr. Dobson, "unless you gentlemen decide to do so. The position is a peculiar one. Except for Mr. Fleming's statement we should have known nothing concerning Mr. Harcroft, and our claims are entirely unsubstantiated; in fact, we have no claim at all until the missing will is found. I could only bring an action on the strength of Mr. Fleming's evidence."

"I desire justice, above all things," answered Sir James, "and am quite willing to report the loss of the pearls and the supposed will in the right quarter. That there was a gift to Miss Marjory Cheniston, this slip of paper proves. If you are willing, we will go at once before a magistrate."

"But why not look for it first?" said Marjory. "As I said before, Mr. Harcroft may have removed the pearls to a place which he considered safer."

"In which event he would not have removed them out of their case," said Philip. "But there is no reason why the place should not be thoroughly searched, as Miss Cheniston proposes. Shall we do so at once?"

Marjory looked eagerly at Sir James, who bowed his head, saying, "I am willing." At the same time Mr. Dobson noticed a strange smile lurking in the corners of his mouth.

"I believe he suspects the young man," was the thought which flashed across his mind.

However, the search was agreed upon, and for upwards

of two hours every available corner of the studio and of the two rooms opening out of it was ransacked, but in vain. At last, worn out with fatigue and excitement, Marjory threw herself upon a couch, buried her face in the cushions, and burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"Poor child," said Mr. Dobson, turning to Philip, "I am sorry I brought her over, but your letter was so positive, I thought it might be necessary to prove her identity."

"You cannot be more grieved than I am," answered the young man. "I felt so certain that every word Mr. Harcroft spoke was to be trusted, and I believe so still. Miss Cheniston, you must not give up; I can assure you I will leave no stone unturned to establish your claim, and I am sure Sir James also will do his utmost."

"I am willing to wait a reasonable time," said Sir James; "but if no will turns up I shall certainly make good my claim."

A knock at the door startled them all. "Come in," said Philip Fleming; and a young girl entered, saying in English, but with a strong French accent, "I came to see, Monsieur Philip, if you would not be working again soon."

A look of annoyance crossed Philip Fleming's face as he answered, "No, not at present, thank you, Thirza."

The girl stood in the middle of the studio and looked round smiling, showing a row of white pearly teeth between her rosy lips, whilst her dark flashing eyes laughed in unison.

She was very beautiful; her complexion had that soft peach-like bloom which denotes a Southern origin; her hair was black as the raven's wing and as glossy, it grew rather low down upon a broad brow, curling in soft tendrils. She was above the average height, but her figure was so perfectly moulded that there was not a flaw in her appearance; her dress was very plain, chiefly black, but in her hat, nestling into her dark hair, was a deep crimson rose.

Marjory had lifted her head and was looking at her in pure astonishment; she had never seen anything so beautiful, so strange.

Suddenly the girl burst out laughing, exclaiming in her pretty musical voice, "Oh, you English, how serious you are! how sad!"

"One cannot always be laughing as you are, Thirza," said Philip. "Have you already forgotten your good friend Mr. Harcroft?"

"Forgotten him! Oh, no," she answered. "I, too, have wept, but it will not bring him back; so I weep no more, it only spoils my eyes."

Catching sight of the red jewel case which had contained the necklace of pearls, she exclaimed, "Ah, those pretty things, are they for her?" and she looked with a jealous pout at Marjory.

"Do you know what that case contained?" asked Philip, abruptly.

"Pearls," said the girl—"big white pearls. The master had them in his hand one day when I came, and he let me look at them, and even touch them; they were very beautiful."

Philip looked at her; then taking up the case, he opened it and said quietly, "Someone has stolen them; see, the case is empty."

A look of horror and genuine astonishment came into her eyes. "It is not possible!" she said.

"It is a fact," said Philip. "We are going to the nearest magistrate to make our statement."

The girl's face grew livid. "Oh, Monsieur Philip, you will not say I saw them! If you bring me into the concern it will ruin me, for you know I am only a model!" and she burst into tears.

"Come, come," said Philip, "I will say nothing I am not obliged to say; I am sure you are honest, Thirza," and he patted her on the shoulder.

She shrank away from him, then drew herself up proudly, and answered firmly—

"Yes, I am honest; I promised my mother I would always be honest."

Marjory had risen and was standing beside her.

"If I can help it, no one shall trouble you," she said. "The pearls were for me; they might be very beautiful, but I do not care for them."

"Not care for the beautiful things!" exclaimed Thirza, indignantly.

Marjory shook her head. "Not as much as for a sheet of paper which was with them. Did you happen to see that?"

"Yes," said Thirza, "I remember quite well, for I stood close by him; he covered them up with a paper written all over." She paused, hesitated a moment, then said quickly, "I know nothing more."

Marjory sighed.

"I will go," said Thirza. "I wish I had not come to-day; it is unlucky. Good-bye, Mr. Philip." And with a sweeping bow all round, she left the studio.

"Who is she?" asked Sir James.

"She is 'Thirza, the model,'" answered Philip. "She is known to be a good, honest girl, fatherless and motherless; she lives with an old aunt, a hag, a sort of fortune-teller, I believe, who takes all her earnings and does not always use her well. How the girl has grown up to be what she is surprises everyone; she has had so little chance."

"A model," asked Marjory; "what is that?"

Philip laughed.

"You see, she is very beautiful," he said, "and she sits to us painters for her head and her hands; they are just perfect, and so she earns her living."

After this, there was a painful pause.

"Oh," said Marjory. "Mr. Dobson, I think I will go home; there is nothing more for me to do here."

(To be continued.)

Do Not Scold.—For the sake of your children, do not scold. It is a great misfortune to have children reared in the presence and under the influence of a scold. The effect of the everlasting complaining and fault-finding of such persons is to make the young who hear it unamiable, malicious, and callous-hearted, and they often learn to take pleasure in doing the very things for which they receive tongue lashings. As they are always getting the blame of the wrong-doing, whether they do it or not, they think they might as well do wrong as right. They lose all ambition to strive for the favourable opinion of a fault-finder, since they see they always strive in vain. Thus a scold is not only a nuisance, but a destroyer of the morals of children. A kind word is generally more powerful than the bitterest chiding.

On the way to Isaac.

THE FAIR REBEKAH.

BY CHARLOTTE SKINNER, AUTHOR OF "MY HAPPY POSSESSIONS," ETC.

YOU can see her, can you not, as she comes on her way to the well? She is *fair* to look upon, not because she is a blonde in contrast to a brunette, but because her countenance is pleasing—a face you would seek to take a second look at. And she has *fair* words, not to a young, probable suitor, but to an old man; and her actions are fair also, for she gives of the water she has drawn to the old man and his camels.

Her fairness of form and features was not praiseworthy, seeing she was not responsible for it, but her words and actions were. "Draw water! I should think not! I have enough to do of that already," might have been her answer. "Drive the cattle to water! Nay, Laban, you must get someone else to do that. I prefer staying with mother," might have been her excuse to shirk work. In the case of an English girl, pride would have stepped in. To carry a paper parcel up the street, or to wash a doorstep—the very thought of such things would send some young women into a faint. Yet why should any honourable work be despised? How much more sunshine there would be in life if our words were more gentle, and our actions more helpful!

Yes, Rebekah was fair, but——!

FAIR BUT FORWARD.

She was willing to go at once and marry a man of whom, though her cousin, neither she nor any member of her family had any personal knowledge. Of course, we cannot judge her according to English ideas, but according to Eastern customs she was forward. The old servant had previously said, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me," plainly showing it was an unusual thing. At least Rebekah should have said, "Laban must come with me." Some people say, "But the marriage was arranged by God." Truly the meeting between the servant and Rebekah was arranged by God, but nothing more. Had Rebekah said with womanly dignity and modesty, "Now that you have seen what I am like, go back and tell Isaac, and let him come and do his own wooing," after events might have been altogether different.

And many of our English girls err in the same way. What is all the promenading for, the painting of the face, and the slavish following of fashion, but to attract the attention of men? How often are heard the flippant remarks of young women to the men they pass in the streets! Then comes the "walking out" with comparative strangers, then the hasty marriage, or life-long shame.

And what is marriage without love in the eyes of God? We condemn the girl who for a sovereign or five-pound note sells her purity, but is not the woman who sells her whole life for two, or five hundred a year equally guilty before God?

So the two were married, and we read that Isaac loved Rebekah, but there is not a hint given that Rebekah loved Isaac.

FAIR BUT FAITHLESS.

A time of difficulty and distress came into Rebekah's life, and she goes to God for guidance, and He gave it. This proves that Isaac had taught his wife about his father's religion, and that Rebekah, at least during her trouble, had taken God into her life. But afterwards she grows impatient of the slow development of God's plans, and takes the affair into her own little weak hands, thus putting God out of her life. Her actions said, "I am tired of waiting; God is slow to show His favours to my youngest child; I'll see now what I can do in the matter."

If I went to some noted artist, and said to him, "Give me your brush, I do not care for the slow way you are painting, or for the way you are working your picture out," what would the artist say to me, and what would become of the picture under my unskilled hand? "You would not get the brush," is your reply. No; yet we often say to the Great Artist and Shaper of Destinies: "Give me Your tools; I can do the work myself." Unbelief and impatience often speak like that. And to let us prove our own ignorance God sometimes answers our cry. Oh, the number of marred pictures unbelief has made! Surely His past mercies and deliverances ought to make us confident in the present, and for the future. Our "Ebenezers" should be as beacon lights streaming out into the dark beyond, and making us, by their radiance, ever courageous. Certainly God works slowly, but certainly God works surely, both in the histories of men and women, and in nations likewise.

FAIR BUT FALSE.

She lends herself to her husband's falseness. To keep his own life secure, Isaac had said, "She is my sister," and how could he keep that lie up without her consent? Principles were pocketed for supposed self-interest. Present day expediency often does the same. "Yes," say some, "we deal of the greengrocer who keeps his shop open on the Sabbath because he sells such good articles." "Yes, we deal with the grocer who has a spirit license, though we believe in Temperance principles, because, you see, his things are a halfpenny cheaper, and then we must have brandy for our puddings and wine for our parties." "And though we know we should do to others as we would be done by, we shop late on Saturday nights because some tradesmen sell cheaper then, and it is nice to be out when plenty of people are about." "Yes, I am a staunch Protestant, but I send my children to a Roman Catholic School, the education is better there." "Certainly, I believe in progress. I believe that the daughter of a charwoman should have the chance of a University training, if she has the brains to benefit by it. What do I *do* towards the world's progress? Oh, nothing; I have only time to look after myself."

Such is the way people talk by their actions. Had we not better be without any principles at all, than with such we can so easily dispose of?

Rebekah was false to her eldest child. He was as much her child as the youngest was, yet she did not give him an equal share of love, and deliberately planned to defraud him. In the eyes of the world, she was "*mother;*" in the eyes of God and Esau, she was "*traitoress.*"

Where there is favouritism there is danger. But there are few mothers who will confess to it, although guilty. This is not because they are wilfully untruthful, but love blinds them. The safest course is to see that the dullest child of the family is the most petted; the bright, sparkling one is sure to win its share of love.

But there is another form of favouritism. The child whose parents are well-to-do, and give it a good education and provide for its future, is petted by us, and we invite it to our homes; but the child whose parents have given it a heritage of woe, around whose childhood there is none of the sunshine God intended it to have, only gloom, this child we shun, and even think if a number of them lived in the same street with us, there would be a kind of defilement. God pity us in our littleness!

Rebekah was false to her husband—the blind husband who had loved her so fondly, and who so sorely needed her help. I believe she had no respect for him. His love of ease and eating perhaps jarred upon her impetuous nature. But was not all this through the hasty marriage? And why all the friction nowadays between husbands and wives? Is it not through the same cause? But when once married, it is for us to make the best of our bargain.

In well-assorted marriages there should be no secrets, but if the husband has no sympathy with the wife's aims, though she is not bound to tell him everything, she is bound never to deceive him. No circumstance, however trying or perilous, can justify an untruth, acted, arranged, or spoken.

Rebekah was false to her favourite child. Jacob ought to have found in her a sure guide for his weak steps. A boy's best friend should ever be his mother. A mother's work should ever be to bring to higher development the best tendencies of her children, and to check the lower ones. George Washington's mother used to say, "George never told me a lie," but that was largely owing to the fact that George Washington's mother never told George a lie.

We so often sin thoughtlessly. We dislike vain children, yet often say to our little girlie, "Show your pretty frock; and where are your pretty buttons and boots?" In after years we scold or punish that child for being fond of show or dress. We often wish our boys were more gentle, yet we give them guns and swords and whips to play with.

Against everything that is false, impure, or debasing, a mother should take a firm stand.

Fair but Forlorn.

Rebekah had lost the love and respect of her eldest child. Her husband's confidence had gone, and even her favourite must have lost all respect for her. Though probably still comely in person, hope had died out of her life, and bereft and forlorn she cries out, "*I am weary of my life.*"

The death of Sarah, Leah, and Rachel is mentioned, but not Rebekah's. Why this silence? Was it because grief caused by sin killed her, or because, seeking some deadly herb, she brewed a potion therefrom, drank it, and one morning Isaac, waking to consciousness but not to sight, found his beautiful Rebekah, whom he had loved so dearly, and gambolled with like a boy, cold and dead? We know not. It is a dark picture, but before leaving it we will write on its margin these golden words for our own encouragement: "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

Our heavenly Father, who wishes His daughters to do great things for Him in this world, and afterwards to share His palace-home, bids us not only to be *fair*, but *firm* and *faithful* too, and to remember: "*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but the woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.*"

BIRDS' WINGS IN CHURCH.

JUST in front of my pew sits a maiden,
A little brown wing in her hat,
With its touches of tropical azure,
And sheen of the sun upon that.

Through the bloom-covered pane shines a glory
By which the vast shadows are stirred;
But I pine for the spirit and splendour
That painted the wing of the bird.

The organ rolls down its great anthem,
With the soul of a song it is blent;
But for me, I am sick for the singing
Of one little song that is spent.

The voice of the pastor is gentle—
"No sparrow shall fall to the ground"—
But the poor broken wing on the bonnet
Is mocking the merciful sound.

Close and sweet is the breath of the lilies
Asleep on the altar of prayer;
But my soul is athirst for the fragrance
Far out in the bountiful air.

And I wonder if ever, or never,
With white wings o'er-weary and furled,
I shall find *the sweet spirit of pity*
Abroad in the heart of the world.

Helps for Busy Housewives.

Using up Stale Bread.—Cut some pieces of bread into squares, about half an inch thick, and soak in milk. Make a syrup of half a teacupful of golden syrup and half of water, with a little sugar. When the bread is soaked, pour some of the syrup over it and bake in a tin, adding a little of the syrup occasionally till done.

Testing Cotton Goods.—When buying any kind of cotton goods, care should be taken that the thread running down the material is of the same thickness as the thread which runs across. If this is so, it will be found that the cotton or linen goods purchased will wear much longer.

Drying.—Never allow tablecloths to hang on the line in a strong wind. The hems will become frayed at the corners, and a general limpness be the result. Nothing is so wearing to all linen and cotton cloth as "switching" in the wind from a clothes-line.

How to take Care of Veils.—Get an ordinary straight rolling pin, cover it smoothly with wadding, and then with satin, silk, or sateen. The veils can be rolled round and pinned on, and when they are wanted they are always fresh, and will wear much longer.

Sofa Cushions.—We sometimes see as many as four pillows on a single sofa or in a cosy corner, and these are none too many for any comfortable couch, the aim of the housewife being to have as great a variety as possible. Frequently the covers used during the winter are removed in summer time and a different covering better adapted for the hot weather is substituted. A particularly attractive pillow is large and square, of a dull-blue Indian silk, and embroidered in black twisted silk. A double frill of black satin finishes this pillow, which is most quaint and effective amongst several bright-hued companions.

To Renovate Umbrella Covers which have become mud-stained and dirty-looking, dissolve a small piece of washing soda in a little hot water, and add it to some cold tea. After brushing off the dust and loose dirt of the cover, brush well with the mixture and leave the umbrella open out-of-doors to dry.

Cucumber and Eggs.—Cut the cucumber into thick slices, dusting on both sides with flour, then lay it in a stew-pan with a little good stock, some parsley, and a little sugar. When this has been simmering for a quarter of an hour, add a dessert-spoonful of pounded white sugar, the yolks of two eggs, salt and pepper, a dessert-spoonful of vinegar, and a little Worcester sauce. Boil up and stir, taking care that it does not burn, and that the slices of cucumber remain unbroken.

A CHAT ABOUT SPINNING AND WEAVING.

BY A. M. CLIVE BAYLEY.

SPINSTERS and wives—they who spun and they who wove.

This is a pretty idea which our language teaches us, and which takes us back to the days long ago of the rush-strewn floor, when the glow from the log fire in the huge open chimneys made a background which threw up in pleasant relief the graceful works of household women. Still in Northern countries you may see the wife, or sometimes the old women who have strength or health left, sitting with their wheels spinning away, and giving to the child's hammock-cradle beside them a gentle touch to make it swing pleasantly.

I was reminded of these scenes in Northern huts, amid surroundings very different, yet still touching and almost sad in their nature. I was in a convent in Belgium and was taken into the hospice, where the old women pensioners sat at their wheels. They were indeed broken and weary forms, sitting in a row facing the wall. Still this joy remained, the joy of being able to do something useful in the world. Over and over again when I have heard of the infirm, aged women who sit unemployed in our workhouses, I have thought of these old bodies proud and happy with the knowledge that death itself may find them at work, and not be forestalled by the living death of idleness.

Reel Stand.

Winder Boy with Small Cards.

Girl Heckling Flax.

Skein Maker.

Carding on Bench.

Spinning Flax.

In Belgium, too, I came across a happy little maiden, so glad she was and proud because she helped "father." She wound his bobbins for him, and he wove all the quicker for her help. Twenty francs a week he earned, a good sum for a Belgian workman, and he was one of the 1,500 hand-weavers who, working at their own time in their own cottages, undersell our English power-loom goods. Many of these weavers I saw, and one pretty girl at her loom rising on her seat with every treadle she put down, and singing blithely withal, remains a charming memory. She and her sister each earned fifteen francs a week if they chose to work.

Now, why should not our girls do the same, working gaily in their own homes? If the Belgians who pay a heavy price for our English cottons can undersell our power-loom market, why should girls here not be able to earn good money too? Why should not the work be done in happy village homes, instead of under all the aggravating disadvantages of mill life? If we can but restore in some measure to spinsters and weavers the happy industry of home life, it will be some compensation for the ever growing evils of over-crowding and over-population. Let the old people in the villages card and heckle and spin. Let those who are not so strong as to be able to weave, make headles and spool, or learn the art of dyeing, and let the hearty and strong have their hand-looms and weave.

The most delicate silks and cambrics are hand-made, so why should not ladies have a little colony of their own and become weavers of beautiful brocades? There is no mystery about the matter. Every detail of the art is in itself easy, it is only the multiplicity of detail which makes it complicated.

Whether it is true or not, there seems to be a general idea that the war against capital and the constant battle of strikes and labour disputes will ruin the capitalist and the cause of power-weaving. If so, this will be a cruel result, for it must bring hundreds and thousands to want and suffering. What we should aim at is to do with the hand what can be best done with the hand, and by power-weaving what is best done with the power-loom.

Yards, millions of yards of sheeting and unpatterned goods are the legitimate product of mechanical power. But whenever pattern, design, or delicate touch comes in, power-looms are out of place.

Just a word of suggestion might here be made. Why not employ the blind for spinning? Why not the deaf for weaving? The latter could acquire all the needful dexterity of sight, for there is very little oral teaching wanted; and what a field of useful occupation would be opened up to the deaf if they could again go forth as teachers!

Into the realm of hand-weaving come the glorious products of the tapestry looms. They are now, as they

Hand Loom for Table. Lace Stand. Gobelins Loom.
Turanian Patterned Towels.

ever were, objects for the drawing-room. It is the rich who can afford the pictures of great events or of beautiful scenes, which are wrought with bobbins on the picture either placed below or chalked on to the threads.

The Jacquard loom is too expensive and too heavy for cottage use. But it can be adapted for any material. The old Spitalfields weavers to this day prefer hand-looms, minus the Jacquard and without fly shuttles.

An ordinary loom suited for cottage use ought not, when set up complete, to cost more than £5, and many are a good deal less than that; and the spinning-wheels for about 19s. to 25s. are serviceable articles. There are few trades which can be set up for less than this.

The illustrations which accompany this little paper have been taken from the industries at the Spinning and Weaving School, Blenheim Street, New Bond Street, London. The object of the School is to give the opportunity to English men and women to learn what they can of the art of spinning and weaving, and preparing raw material for these operations. The charges for tuition are put as low as possible so as just to cover the cost of maintaining the School, which I shall be very glad to show anyone who likes to come; and shortly I hope we may be able to show how to make old English lace.

The School began in a very simple way, for the writer, who was then secretary to the Froebel Society, was merely anxious to carry out the simple Kindergarten mat-plaiting into a useful occupation for older children.

"I wish I knew someone who wove," I said, and a friend standing by at once replied, "Well, I know a lady who is weaving her heart out, and is weary of it because no one is interested in her work. Why don't you set up your school with her?" And so the School began.

The weaver was a Swede, and a second Swede, Froken Hamilton, who was generally known as Countess Hamilton, begged so hard to join and finally to work the School alone, that it was left in her hands. After a year she returned to her own country; the other Swede married, and I returned to my original idea of an *English* school. As it was, from my Regent Street School when managed by the Swedes at least two village classes started, one at Winterslow ably worked for woollen goods, and one for spinning and art weaving by Mrs. King, near Godalming.

During the past few months several similar classes have been initiated in rural districts, and seem to promise favourably. While striving to make the school an English one, I am forced to have foreign teachers; but as soon as weaving is once an established work, the need for such assistance will be over. H.R.H. the Princess of Wales expressed herself so pleased with the Spinning Competition held last year in the Royal Albert Hall that ten wheels were ordered for Sandringham.

One of my Finnish weavers has been teaching the inmates of a lunatic asylum; another is reviving her industry of weaving in a distant station in Scotland.

While the Swedish ladies were managing my Regent Street School I went to Finland, and there learned much of these old-fashioned arts, and if eventually the effort succeeds the industry will have worked round in a circle. It was carried about the twelfth century from England to Sweden, and from Sweden to Finland, and so back again.

Finnish Dow Chest. Weaveress at Loom.

A SUNDAY PROBLEM.

BY A. A. WHITFIELD.

"MOTHER, do you not wish we gathered manna now, as did the children of Israel, getting a double portion on Saturday, and having no need for so much baking and brewing on Sunday? We could all go to church then, as they do at Aunt Hattie's."

It was my eldest daughter, Lena, who asked the question, standing at the dining-room door, ready for church-going, save the gloves she was putting on, having aided me with the work until the last moment.

The others calling her, she did not hear my answer, but joined them, and together they went out. I heard the front door close. In fancy I walked with them to the church, taking my seat beside them, and thinking how good it would be to be there, all together in the house of God.

"As they do at Aunt Hattie's." I seemed to hear the words over and over as I went about my work preparing dinner, for it was for this I had remained at home. Since Lena, now nearly seventeen, had been able to take my place somewhat, we often took turns remaining home from church to prepare the dinner.

"As they do at Aunt Hattie's." How well I knew that was but a repetition of the way they used to do at home—that old home where Aunt Hattie and I were girls together. How well I remembered Sunday in that dear village home! Lena's words had brought it back to me as though it were but yesterday I had enjoyed its restful Sabbath day. There no extra hours were spent in the kitchen preparing an elaborate dinner on Sunday. The children accompanied their parents to church; returning home, a plain and wholesome meal, easily prepared, was set before us; that dispensed with, what long-to-be-remembered, cherished times we had with mother and father! Then we clustered about their knees, and listened to well-told stories; had our youthful perplexities solved, and were drawn very close to each other, to our parents and to their God; then it was we sang together and prayed together. More than one member of that family circle can trace their first earnest seeking after truth to those Sundays. The remembrance of that hallowed day went with us as we left the home-roof to enter homes of our own, urging with a sweet benediction, "Go and do thou likewise."

"Why is it," I asked myself, "Sunday is so different at my home?" Had I found a better, more profitable way of spending it? Ah, no, my dissatisfied heart told me that. The unwelcome fact that I found Sunday the hardest day of the week, the day that often left me too tired to sleep, reiterated the fact that Sunday was not in my home a day of rest, a milestone on the path to heaven.

The *why* was soon told. I had simply drifted. The first step was easily taken. My husband's work allowed of his being home at midday only one day in seven, and that was on the Sabbath. I had always done my own work, and when a little one came, necessitating that one of us should remain at home, I was the one who stayed, though not without protests from my husband that I should attend church in the mornings and he in the evenings. Then the suggestion came (I think it must have been the evil one who instigated it), how nice it would be to give my husband an extra dinner on Sunday. I was at home anyway and might prepare it just as well as not.

"Would you mind my inviting —— and —— to dinner on Sunday?" my husband had one day said, adding, as he saw my hesitation, "Poor things! they have nothing but the meanest fare year in and year out, and spend their afternoons as best they can; it would really be an act of Christianity, I believe, to invite them here and give them a taste of home life."

The argument conquered. It was a struggle for me to give up the one day I had my husband to myself; "but then who knows," urged a voice, "that you may not thus save a soul?" I yielded a reluctant consent.

From then until now Sunday was the day our friends gathered round us. We never spent the day alone. Sunday dinner was the most elaborate meal we had. There was no time for reading or quiet talking. What wonder Lena wished we might "do as they did at Aunt Hattie's." Dear child! in her plea I heard the voice of my God. I saw my mistake, and what I had been bearing. Thinking I was giving others pleasure and conquering selfishness, I was, in reality, doing no one good, and might be working inestimable harm, since I was robbing my little ones, who would soon be grown up and away from me, of the sweet influences that should always come to them on Sunday in the old home, when in days to come they should hear the church bells calling to worship and feel it is good to mingle with God's people.

I resolved, with God's help, to pursue a different course. No more should Lena sigh for a day such as they had at Aunt Hattie's. There were now none in my keeping too young to be present at the Lord's house under ordinary circumstances, and I determined hereafter, "as for me and mine, we will serve the Lord together in His sanctuary."

I knew it would take planning, but others had done it, my mother had, and I would. It took a little more work on Saturday; it called for a little earlier rising on Sunday morning and a helping hand from each member of the family, but it paid.

The Spot where Mother Prayed.—Richard Knill, a devoted and useful minister, and at one time a missionary in Russia, on returning to England, went home to his native village and retired to rest in the chamber where he had slept when a boy. All night long he lay awake thinking of the mercy and goodness of God to him through life. Early in the morning he looked out of the window, and saw in the garden a tree beneath which his mother had prayed with him forty years before. He went out, and on the same spot knelt down and thanked God for a praying mother. What blessings come through mothers who train their children in the ways of prayer and peace!

WOMEN OF WORTH.

MRS. BLACKIE.

BY ISABEL SUART ROBSON, AUTHOR OF "HINTS ON HOME TEACHING," ETC.

IN viewing the work of any famous man, it is impossible to gauge accurately how much it owes to the stimulus, encouragement, and actual co-operation of his wife; and when she too possesses rare gifts, as in the case of Mrs. Blackie, the debt is a deep one. The late Professor John Stuart Blackie was always the first to acknowledge that he was greatly indebted for success and popularity to his wife's care, sympathy, intelligent interest in his career, and wholesome restraining influence. The story of their life together is one of the most beautiful in literary history. They were an ideal couple, drawn together in early life by mutual admiration for each other's gifts, and retaining, until death parted them, a youthful freshness of feeling.

Mrs. John Stuart Blackie.

Photo by] [*Alex. Ayton, Edinburgh.*

Mrs. Blackie was the third daughter of Mr. Wyld, of Gilston, a connection of the Blackie family through his marriage with a cousin of John Blackie's mother.. When the young man went to spend a few weeks at Gilston, at the invitation of his old school friend, Robert Wyld, Eliza was a girl of eighteen, "tall, straight as a fir, slender, swift, with plentiful fair hair and blue eyes." Her nature was sensitive, proud, strong and noble, with intellectual cravings which inclined her to chafe at the restrictions of a home where luxury and devoted affection had to go hand-in-hand with reserve and conventionality. Her sympathies went out at once to "the most rousing person she had ever known," and mutual attraction soon grew into love. Any engagement between them met with the strongest disapprobation among Miss Wyld's friends—a briefless advocate, who had already changed his mind more than once with regard to a profession, who made only a precarious living by his pen, and, though undeniably talented, "gave no promise of future Respectability," was no bridegroom for the talented and beautiful Miss Eliza Wyld. She was not, however, a girl to accept tamely such a sentence. She rose early one morning, left her home with four and sixpence in her purse, and made her way to the house of a relative in Edinburgh. From this shelter she informed her parents that she meant to stand by the man who loved her, and whose intellect and aspiring career she esteemed far above the comforts of Gilston. Before such indomitable resolution her tender-hearted father relented; her choice of mind rather than money was honoured, and she was received at home with affection. In April, 1842, the lovers were married, and from that hour Mrs. Blackie has never had to complain of unemployed energies or unregarded aspirations.

The Professor's income was certainly small, but to her intellectual gifts the young wife happily united a talent for economy and the art of making the best of the materials at her command. Her swiftness of movement as she went here and there beautifying her new home won for her the name "Oke," the swift one, which clung to her through life, and was the last word upon the Professor's lips before he passed away. Old friends remember the charm with which Mrs. Blackie endowed her various dwellings, every detail giving the impression of harmony, variety, and comfort, almost unique in days when artistic furnishing was yet unknown.

Wherever domiciled, the hospitality of the Blackies was proverbial, and the magnet was ever the hostess, whose rare tact, capacity for apprehending all that was stirring the great world, and not less her swift condemnation of matter and manner which was not of the best, did much to hold her husband's friends to him. The Professor used laughingly to protest that she wished to rob him of the unconventionalities which were his chief glory. He did not see, as she did, that many a time little roughnesses and eccentricities hid "the real John Blackie" from those who came prepared to be helpful and friendly.

No wife ever honoured her husband's freedom of action more, but she would at times beg for "small concessions to the usual," and endeavour to provoke him to a manner void of offence upon the public platform. On one occasion she was audacious enough to shear some of his flowing locks while he slept—a venturesome action which the victim perpetuated in humorous verse:

"A man was he, not made of vulgar stuff,
Honest and stout and true and somewhat rough,
And who a stiff, ungracious crest upreared
Against fair hands that kindly interfered.
And so his wife, with silent footsteps, crept
One day behind the old dog as he slept,
And shore those snow-white locks with cunning shears,
Whose loss she now bedews with pious tears."

Many stories are told of Mrs. Blackie's great kindness of heart. She always took a motherly interest in the Highland students who attended her husband's classes, and frequently nursed them in sickness. On one occasion, hearing of a poor student who was lying ill and unattended, she went to his lodging and nursed him for a month, when she had the gratification of seeing her patient thoroughly recovered. Unhappily the failure of her own health, comparatively early in life, limited the active exercise of her loving energies, though her sympathy and interest in every detail of others' need have remained unchecked. In Edinburgh visitors usually gravitated to the invalid's room, where afternoon tea was served; and grey-haired professors, no less than enthusiastic students, delighted to carry thither the academic and social news of the day.

It was a matter of deep regret to the Professor when "his faithful Oke" could no longer accompany him upon the foreign tours and country expeditions so necessary to his health. He would have abandoned them had not Mrs. Blackie, with characteristic self-sacrifice, insisted on their continuance. "When my private letters are published your character will appear in its true light," he wrote, whimsically, during one absence. "The gross slanders to which I am daily exposed of deserting my poor wife will then appear in all their horrid invention."

In spite of long apprenticeship to sickness, Mrs. Blackie survives her husband, and still holds an honoured place in the circle of Edinburgh friends who loved and esteemed the Professor. The period between her great loss and the future reunion has been brightened by the share she has taken in the labours of her husband's biographer, and it has been a source of pleasure to her to see his "Life and Letters" given to the world. To Mrs. Blackie's friends, and they are many, the volumes have an interest beyond the story of the Professor's life and work; they prove most eloquently the wife's right to a place among "the wise women"—"the heart of her husband did safely trust in her; she did him good and not evil all the days of her life."

NOVEL NOTIONS.

A VENTILATING LID.

IT is a wise practice to partially cover most liquids when not immediately in use. Milk, for instance, soon absorbs strong odours of various kinds. Then insects and smuts are liable to spoil drinkables left exposed. Here is a fly-proof ventilating lid for jugs, milk-pans, and similar vessels, which should prove effective and useful. The cover is made of wire gauze or perforated metal, and in this case has a smaller lid in the centre for pouring in liquids, such as milk. As flies have been proved to convey infection, this lid may well be adopted, especially in the keeping of food and drink.

HOW TO AVOID SUNSTROKE.

Some interesting experiments have recently been made on the secondary causes of sunstroke. It was found that animals performing very hard work for long hours, till almost exhausted, quickly succumbed to the heat of the sun; whilst others doing the same task, but not over-worked, were far less liable to sunstroke. The fact proves that fatigue is a predisposing cause of the painful summer ailment, and that it behoves every one, especially women, not to over-exert themselves in visiting and shopping during the hot weather; and at the same time to avoid all heavy, fatiguing articles of dress. If further warning be needed, we have but to remember the large number of soldiers who are struck down by the sun's rays while on an arduous march.

A SIMPLE WASHING MACHINE.

Any invention which aims at lessening the laboriousness of washing clothes is sure to be welcomed. The "People's" washing machine is put forward as having good claims for notice. The machine is intended for use with an ordinary washing-board, and consists of a pair of corrugated rollers of brass, which are mounted in a frame. It is asserted that by the use of this machine, which has simply to be run up and down the board over the articles to be washed, thorough cleansing is speedily secured without damage to the clothes.

A VEILED SHEET.

During the warm days of summer nothing is more troublesome to young children while taking their midday sleep than the attentions of the annoying household fly. No sooner is the little one left to enjoy its infant slumbers than it is irritatingly disturbed, if not awakened, by a sting or a buzz. The veiled sheet is devised to avoid all this. Near the top of the sheet a square hole is made and a gauze veil inserted. This affords protection to the sleeper, while allowing a free circulation of needed air. Of course, there are other uses—during sickness, for example—for this sheet.

*** Readers wishing for further particulars about the Ventilating Lid, illustrated above, are invited to write to the Editor at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., enclosing a stamped envelope for reply.

"POLLY SMITH, CRIPPLE."

"Polly Smith, Cripple."

"ARE you quite sure it's me that is to go, mother? There's three Polly Smiths in the court. Don't you think the treat might be meant for one of the others?"

"No, my girl; the other Polly Smiths don't go on crutches like you, nor they don't live at No. 24. The card says, as plain as it can, 'Polly Smith, cripple, living at No. 24, Plum Court.' That's you right enough, and I'm that glad I could cry about it. A fortnight in the country will do you a whole world of good."

To say that Polly was pleased at the prospect before her is to express very faintly the state of her feelings. All her poor little life had been spent in stuffy Plum Court, and she was so badly crippled that she had never been able to walk as far as the Park, a mile away. where the children sometimes went to play. Her mother, a hard-working widow, had taken her once or twice, but she had little time for outings with her crippled daughter; and the twopenny tram fare for both of them to and from the park was a serious consideration.

But the rare occasions on which she had seen the grass and trees lived in Polly's memory; and the prospect of spending a whole fortnight in the country filled her poor little heart to overflowing. Think of it, you mothers who live in the country always, or who can send your children to revel in green fields and shady woods almost any day, with little or no effort on your part. Is it not pitiful that so simple a thing as a fortnight of country life should bring to the heart of a child the greatest joy it has ever known? Sunshine, and fresh air, and happiness are the natural birthright of every child; and yet uncounted thousands of little ones pine, and languish, and die in our great cities for lack of these things. Whose fault is it? Not yours, do you say? It has not been your fault hitherto if you have not known of the need of these children; but now that you do know, it will be partly your fault unless you help them as far as you can.

Our little friend Polly was one of a number of children sent through the agency of the Ragged School Union to a country place some ten miles out of London, and placed in the care of kindly people. For the first day or two of the holiday she was too tired and listless to go about much; but by the end of the first week she had improved wonderfully, and she sent this message home: "Tell mother it's lovely here. If only I had her and little Bill (her brother) with me, I should be quite happy. I do wish we could live in a place like this always."

When the time came for her to go home, she would hardly have been recognised as the same child who had left No. 24, Plum Court, a fortnight before. As a matter of fact, her own mother positively did not know her when she first saw her at the London station on her return, and Polly had to introduce herself with the glad cry, "Why, don't you know me, mother?"

The good effects of Polly's country holiday will remain until far on in the coming winter; and the story of her doings during those blissful days will be told over and over again to the poor, loving mother and little Bill. But after a time the memory of it all will begin to fade; and next spring Polly and many another sick and crippled one will be wondering whether a further holiday is in store for them. On you, good reader, to some extent, does this depend. If all who can will strengthen the hands of those who labour for the children of the noisome slums and dingy courts of our towns and cities, Polly and her little fellow-sufferers will not ask in vain for another health-giving holiday amid the sweet delights of God's pure country. Will you help?

We have not been asked by anybody to plead for the

Waiting for the Train.

children. Indeed, they plead for themselves; and all that is necessary, we feel sure, is to remind those who have the power to help that their aid is sorely needed. We would suggest that Mr. John Kirk, of the Ragged School Union, Norfolk Street, Strand, London, will be grateful for any sums, however small, sent to him in aid of the Poor Children's Holiday Fund; and our readers may rest assured that the children will receive the very utmost value for every penny subscribed on their behalf. M.

MOTHERS IN COUNCIL.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," ETC.

August 1st, 1896.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I wonder whether you will think me very conceited if I quote from a letter which I received some time back. "I feel I must tell you how interesting and helpful I have found the MOTHERS' COMPANION, 'Mothers in Council' especially so. I am determined by God's help to bring up my boy for Him. To keep my home (soldiers' married quarters) cheery and bright, and be a real help-meet to my husband, and I hail with delight any suggestion that will help me to do so."

I think you have already had my opinion on the value of a little praise. Don't be afraid, mothers, of praising your children. Many and many a child's character is altered and ruined because it never hears a word of cheering praise. Praise is to the child what sunshine is to the flower; don't grudge them to either. We big people are but "children of an older growth;" therefore do not withhold your praise and appreciation from husband, friend, or servant. Blame, blame, worry, worry, and ne'er a word of praise, that's the sort of life to take the "go" out of anybody. Therefore I am anxious to show my gratitude to the mother who wrote me the above letter, which will remain in my mind for many a day—anxious, too, that her determination to try to live for God may find an echo in the hearts of many of my friends. The way is not easy for any of us, but do not let us be discouraged. God will help us, and when our task is done, if we have been faithful, we shall hear that most welcome of all praises, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

* * * *

"Rational dress for children?" Well, after all, that is only an expression, and what I think rational, some-one else might think utterly insane. Nevertheless, I hope "ELSIE" will flourish in hers. I think that children's garments should be reduced in quantity and improved in quality, and that all should be suspended from the shoulder instead of from the waist. A second pair of drawers cut as loose knicker-bockers and made of light or heavy woollen material, according to the season, should be worn by women and children, so that there is only one outer garment required. In this way we are less hampered in our movements and more graceful in our appearance. As I said once before, I know of no better patterns than those supplied by Butterick and Co., Regent Street.

* * * *

Poor "JANE," I can sympathise with you. Want of proper sleep is certainly one of the most trying complaints, and unfortunately it is daily on the increase, so it behoves us to face the enemy and try to rout him. Have you ever tried this simple prescription? Dip a lump of sugar in cold water, and suck it. I own that I have not tried it myself, but a medical man assures me that his father and sister never try any other. Whatever you do, don't take sedatives, except by doctor's orders. There is a splendid mixture of spirit of nutmeg (British Pharmacopœia) which you can get at any good chemist's. Take one teaspoonful in a tablespoonful of water when you go to bed, and repeat after two hours if necessary. This is simply a means of driving the blood from the head to the stomach, and has no dangerous qualities whatever.

Another good plan for bad sleepers is always to have some light food in the bedroom. A drink of milk and a biscuit, or a few spoonfuls of cold beef tea, will often induce sleep. If none of these answer, then try Sulphonal. Take a five-grain tabloid after your evening meal. It is better to do this than to go to bed, worry yourself very wide awake, and then take the Sulphonal. Try to train yourself to put aside all thoughts of this world as you discard your clothes. Sleep is a foreshadowing of death. When that long sleep comes, we shall be compelled to let go of the cares, the worries, the pleasures, the pains of this world. Why can't we try to educate ourselves into doing it every night? "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Let us try to make those words our own when we lie down to rest each night, as we all hope to do when the last call comes. I confess that in speaking to "JANE," and all other anxious people whose nightly rest is disturbed by the daily cares, I am preaching to myself. Too often my own habit is to put off till the quiet of night the solving of certain difficulties, the unravelling of certain knotty points; but I am convinced that it is wrong, utterly wrong, and as I wrote this my hand seemed to run away with me. Was it not God speaking to me, and through me to all who are over-anxious? I think so. Let us try to do better.

* * * *

OUR PUZZLE PARAGRAPH.

"WIDOW" wants to know what is the duty of a mother with regard to her boys when they are about to begin life away from home, either at a big school or in the workshop.

Answers must be sent to me at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., before the 15th inst., with "Puzzle Paragraph" on the outside. A book valued at half-a-crown will be sent to the writer of the best solution, which will also be printed in this column. As "WIDOW'S" question is one which must at some time exercise the minds of all parents, I hope you will all try and answer it for her.

Owing to the fact that the remainder of the volume of MOTHERS' COMPANION for the present year has to be prepared a long time in advance, it will be impossible for me to announce the Puzzle Paragraph awards as I have hitherto done; but the competitions will, of course, be continued, and the prizes will be awarded as usual. The awards for the rest of this year will be published as early as possible in 1897.

* * * *

The question in our May number brought me some very interesting replies. The prize has been won by Mrs. Annie Child, 3, Star Yard, Chesham, Bucks; and I have pleasure in commending Mrs. Amor, Mrs. Rowe, Mrs. Warford, Mrs. Manning, Mrs. Purvey, and Miss Williams for their answers. Two children were amongst the competitors this time! Ethel Wilson, aged twelve, very sensibly wrote, "She should wait patiently till she can get enough," and May Laud detailed the plan for paying by deposit.

* * * *

Chicken-pox is not by any means a serious illness. Keep the youngster in bed for a day or two, "ANNIE," give him a mild aperient, and two teaspoonfuls of the following mixture in water three times a day: Sulphate of quinine (Howard's), 2 grains; dilute nitro-muriatic acid, 20 drops; syrup of orange, ½ drachm; glycerine, ½ drachm; caraway water, sufficient to make 1 oz.

When the spots have been well out for three days, dab them all with carbolic oil.

* * * *

Your servant rendered herself liable to instant dismissal by absenting herself against your orders, "LOUISE"; but I think you did well to give her another chance. It is a serious thing to send a girl adrift at a moment's notice, especially when she has no home near. A servant can claim a month's wages instead of a month's warning if there is no real reason for sudden dismissal, but she cannot claim board wages. I hope matters will go more smoothly now, and that you may be rewarded for your leniency.

* * * *

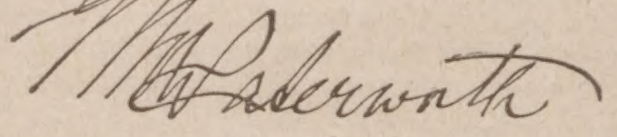
That reminds me of another letter which I have unfortunately mislaid. As I answered it immediately, it does not so much matter that I have forgotten the writer's name. A poor girl wrote to ask whether a mother could claim her daughter's earnings. She had been in two places already, but was obliged to leave because her mother took her money and she could not keep herself properly dressed. Alas! there are, I fear, many such cases, and my advice to such girls can only be what seems at first hard-hearted. Go right away from home. Start a bank-book, and keep it regularly going. If really necessary, give your mother a certain sum every month, but keep out of her reach.

* * * *

So you want my opinion on the marriages of divorced persons, do you, "JESSIE"? I wonder why you did not send me your address? Can it be that you wanted to entice me into a dissertation on the subject in these columns? No, thank you. I tell you what I will do though, I will get the opinion of our friends on the subject next month, if all is well; so look out for the next Puzzle Paragraph.

* * * *

Poor "TROUBLED ONE," you have my sympathy. I strongly suspect that you are not alone in your trouble, but as you have asked my advice I will give it plainly. I suppose no one likes to think of the *sheep* when he sits down to a leg of mutton; yet if everyone in the world turned vegetarian to-morrow, why, in ten years what should we do with the rabbits alone, not to mention other animals? Joking apart, though, I do most thoroughly believe that the call may come to one to be a vegetarian, to another to be a total abstainer from alcohol, to another to renounce something else, and that when the call comes we should surely answer it. But we must be careful to answer it with our whole heart and soul—to mind that we are not straining out the gnats while we swallow the camels, simply because we dislike the one and enjoy the other. Am I talking above your heads? Perhaps I am, but I flatter myself that most of you will understand me. What we all have to do is to be *real*, and to set our faces against shams of any kind. —Yours truly,



BABY'S FIRST STEPS.

BABY stood by a chair, upon which were heaped her small treasures—an attenuated rag doll, a rattle, some bright blocks, and a toy railway train that would not "go."

Mother, who thought it time the little feet should begin to bear the restless body about, was pleading with her to come across the narrow space between them.

The little brain seemed to calculate carefully the distance and the probable danger. At last she shook her head in a decided manner, turned her back upon her mother, and resumed her play with the toys, deaf to all further pleading. Holding fast to her support with one hand, she moved cautiously about the chair, intent upon the disposal of each one.

By and-by, mother leaned forward, lifted up the most cherished of these, and placed it near her chair across the bit of space. Baby frowned, shook her head disapprovingly, and hugged those remaining more closely. Another was lifted across, then another, until the little one stood, with tearful, wondering eyes, beside an empty chair.

Presently, with eyes fixed on her treasures, she stretched out her hands, took two uncertain, wavering steps, and was in her mother's arms.

How like the Heavenly Father's leading! Intent upon our own affairs, we refuse to listen to Him until He gathers up and sets down upon the "other side" our treasures of love. Bereft, desolate, we hasten with outstretched hands to the Everlasting Arms.—*Elizabeth Ferguson Seat.*

HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING.

BY A PRACTICAL DRESSMAKER.

ONCE more the holiday month has come round. Serge dresses and suits are undoubtedly the most useful for rough wear at the seaside when the weather is cool enough for them to be worn with comfort. On warmer days serge can be used with a blouse of drill or print. Butcher-blue drill, however, is very pretty, but it fades very quickly both with the sun and in washing, especially the cheaper qualities.

Muslins are certainly the most prominent among cotton goods. The designs are lovely, and the choicest qualities are priced so moderately as to be within the reach of most people. They will be very economical in wear, as the white and cream grounds are well covered and can be used without washing for quite a considerable time, provided they are pressed out occasionally with a cool iron. Some of the dainty blouses have a loose lining of silk or sateen, which makes the laundry work much easier than when the bodice is made on to the lining. Simple muslin blouses are finished down the front with a waterfall frill, and it is becoming the fashion to pull the deep sleeve ruffles of lace or material through the coat-sleeve. The roll collar is very much used both on blouses and dress bodices. A stiff interlining is adopted, which in the case of washing materials is made quite separate, so as to be removed easily. Basques are generally made both to blouses and dress bodices. Dress skirts do not remain so extravagantly wide as formerly. One of the most useful is that which has a narrow-shaped front width united to a wide side gore, while three godets form the back.

Fig. 27

Fig. 27. We have here a dress suitable for a child between the ages of six and ten. The skirt and lower part of the bodice are made of serge united with shoulder straps. This is suitable for wearing over a fancy cotton blouse, which can be made of zephyr, gingham, or muslin. The waistband and straps are trimmed with a narrow lace insertion.

Fig. 28. Most of our readers who require a long cloak will be pleased with the cosy pattern shown here. The under part is made on a yoke, as is shown in outline, and is open all the way down the front. Below the yoke it is tied with bows of ribbon. The little loose sleeve is drawn in at the wrist with a ribbon run into a casing. The upper part consists of two pelerines set into a round collar yoke, the edges of which are ornamented with Valenciennes lace about four inches wide and set on with a little heading. In warm weather the pelerine could be used without the under part. Both garments must be lined throughout. Sateen with silk facing is often used, but we think nun's-veiling is preferable, being lighter and softer. The under part is sometimes wadded and quilted, which is a great advantage in cold weather. Fine white or cream cashmere is the material usually employed for a baby's first cloak.

Fig. 28.

Fig. 29.

Fig. 29. This is a useful pattern for a lady's dressing-gown. There are some very elegant patterns shown in flannelette which are much less expensive than the ordinary dressing-gown flannel, but they are not so warm. The design here illustrated is made in plain and fancy stuff. The body part is lined, and the plain material turns back with a wide sailor collar. A stripe of fancy material is gathered in full at the neck and hooks down the side. The waist is drawn in with a band of ribbon with rosettes. Puff sleeves with tight cuffs. Lace insertion trims the collar and sleeve cuffs.

Fig. 30 shows a yoke collar with shoulder frills. It can be made in any material, lace, embroidery, or velvet. Some of our readers will see that the pattern is suitable for a pinafore yoke. Embroidery edging about six inches wide should be used, and one yard will make a yoke large enough for a child about six. Two widths of material (fancy muslin) sloped out at the armholes is set on below the yoke.

Fig. 30.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Figs. 27, 28, and 29, 6½d. each; Fig. 30, 4½d., post free. Address "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.